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# *amnesty international*

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## £KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

### @Sam Rainsy MP: Concern for the safety of an elected representative

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Sam Rainsy, an elected member of the Cambodian National Assembly, and prominent critic of the Royal Cambodian Government. Sam Rainsy, the former Minister of Finance and Economics has been expelled from his political party FUNCINPEC<sup>1</sup>, and is being threatened with imminent expulsion from the Cambodian National Assembly on 8 June 1995. In the last year, Sam Rainsy and his family have received death threats, some of them apparently emanating from within the Royal Cambodian Government. Amnesty International fears for the safety of Sam Rainsy and his family, should he be expelled from the National Assembly and lose his parliamentary privileges.

In the light of a recent crackdown on freedom of expression in Cambodia, Amnesty International is concerned about the safety of all those who advocate political views critical of the government. In September 1994, Nuon Chan, the editor of the Cambodian newspaper *Voice of Khmer Youth*, which had supported Sam Rainsy's political views, received a number of warnings from the Royal Government about the content of his newspaper. The previous editor of the newspaper resigned in July 1994, having received threats to his life. Nuon Chan was shot dead in Phnom Penh on the afternoon of 7

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<sup>1</sup> FUNCINPEC is the French acronym for the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia. The leader of FUNCINPEC, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, is the First Prime Minister of Cambodia's coalition government.

September 1994. No one has been brought to justice for his killing. More recently, two newspaper editors have been sentenced to prison terms for articles published in their newspapers, critical of the Royal Cambodian Government.

Sam Rainsy is an elected representative for the northwest constituency of Siem Reap. During the period of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), he served as one of FUNCINPEC's two representatives on the Supreme National Council. Following the elections organised by UNTAC in May 1993, a coalition government was formed, and Sam Rainsy was appointed Minister of Finance and Economics. In July 1994, he criticised the wording of a draft law which outlawed the Partie of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK or Khmer Rouge), on the grounds that if implemented it would lead to violations of human rights. The law was subsequently amended, but in October 1994, Sam Rainsy was sacked from his government position. Since then, he has continued to criticise the actions of the Royal Cambodian Government, and his criticisms have drawn harsh responses. Several pro-government newspapers have labelled Sam Rainsy as "pro-Khmer Rouge", and the second Prime Minister likened him to "a second Pol Pot".<sup>2</sup> In Cambodia, there have been several cases recently where people accused of having links with the Khmer Rouge have been deliberately and arbitrarily executed by members of the security forces, and their families threatened.<sup>3</sup>

Sam Rainsy and his family have received several threats against their lives following his dismissal from the government. On 31 March 1995, while he was visiting the USA, two truckloads of police from the Ministry of Interior arrived at the Rainsy home in Phnom Penh and removed the bodyguards from the house. A statement from the Ministry of Interior said that the bodyguards had been withdrawn because Sam Rainsy was no longer entitled to them. Sam Rainsy has also been involved in a harsh dispute with the First Prime Minister over comments made by Prince Ranariddh in March 1995. Prince Ranariddh has since initiated the action to have Sam Rainsy removed from the FUNCINPEC party and the National Assembly.

Amnesty International takes no position on the political arguments surrounding the issue of whether Sam Rainsy should be expelled. The organization is solely concerned about his and his family's safety, in light of the threats made against him in the recent past. Amnesty International calls upon the Royal Cambodian Government to provide adequate guarantees for the safety of all elected representatives and their families, and to uphold the rights to freedom of opinion and expression in the country.

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<sup>2</sup> See "Hun Sen Refers to Rainsy as the 'Second Pol Pot'" *The Cambodia Daily*, 27 March 1995. Pol Pot was the leader of the Khmer Rouge throughout the period 1975 to 1978, when it ruled Cambodia, and was responsible for widespread human rights violations. He is believed still to be in charge of the PDK.

<sup>3</sup> See Amnesty International Urgent Action 43/95 *Cambodia: Possible Extrajudicial Executions/Fear for Safety* (ASA 23/03/95, 20 February 1995) and Update (ASA 23/05/95, 13 March 1995).

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